

**Amendments to the Specification:**

Please replace the paragraph starting at page 12, line 22, with the following replacement paragraph:

It will be appreciated that it is possible that in the period of time between reception of the request message R propagated from the source node 10a, and subsequent reception of the mapping message M propagated from the destination node 10b, a cross-connect 4 may have received another mapping message in respect of a different path and including the same label identifier. In this case, the label corresponding to the selected label identifier  $\lambda_1$  will no longer be available, upon subsequent arrival of the mapping message M propagated from the destination node 10b. This situation is illustrated in Fig.3. Thus upon receipt of the mapping message M, the first cross-connect 4a extracts the selected label identifier  $\lambda_1$ , and attempts to assign the corresponding label to the path 16. However, the corresponding label has already been assigned to another path, and is therefore no-longer available. In this circumstance, the first cross-connect 4a prepares a mapping failure message MF including the selected label identifier  $\lambda_1$  and indicating that the corresponding label is no longer available for use (step 120). The mapping failure message is then forwarded (steps 122-126) hop-by-hop back to the destination node 10b, so that resources already assigned to the path 16 en-route to the destination node 10b can be released.